



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
Department on Aging

**Milwaukee County Commission on Aging
Advocacy Committee Meeting
November 4, 2019**

The Advocacy Committee held its regular meeting on Monday, November 4, 2019, at the Marcia Coggs Human Services Building, Conference Room 302E, 1220 W. Vliet St., Milwaukee, WI 53205.

Attendance was taken verbally and documented on a sign-in sheet.

Members Present:

Commissioner Fred Kneuppel, Chair
Barbara Bechtel
Sharon Abston Coleman
Casper Green
John Griffith
Tim Harrington
Bob Haase
David Hoffman
Gary Mikolajczyk
Elliot Moeser
Alice Pugh
Commissioner Shirley Sharp
Judy Troestler

Commissioners Present:

Cesar Pabon

Staff Present:

Jennifer Bergerson, COO, DHHS-BHD
Andy Bethke, MCDA Outreach Social Worker
Dan Idzikowski, MCDA Program and Policy Coordinator
Alec Knutson
Nicole Stickler, County Board Gov't Affairs

Attendees from the Public

Elizabeth Coggs (Sen. Lena Taylor)
Christie Carter, MKE LGBT Center
Tom Garrett, Goodwill
Matthew Hayes, LAW
Julia Sevilla, Sojourner COPE
Gary Sprong
Stephanie Sue Stein, LPS

MINUTES

I. Meeting called to order by Kneuppel at 1:30 PM. Members introduced themselves.

II. Review/Approval of October 7, 2019 Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes

Moeser asks for correction to minutes on page 2. Clarifies that he was asking whether UHS was under investigation by the FBI at the time, not whether BHD had conducted a background investigation.

MOTION: Approve minutes of the October 7, 2019 Advocacy Committee meeting as amended.

ACTION: Passes unanimously. (Mikolajczyk, Haase).

III. Public Comment

Kneuppel calls for public comments.

Moeser suggests we take action on a motion thanking Tom Frazier for his service. Discussion follows.

MOTION: Add to agenda item honoring Tom Frazier's service to the seniors of Milwaukee County.

ACTION: Passes unanimously. Added as Item IX. (Moeser, Bechtel seconds).

IV. Legislative & Policy Updates (Information/Action)

Federal Aging Policy Briefing

Idzikowski notes that the Dignity in Aging Act, which provides for OAA reauthorization has passed the House unanimously and is now pending in the Senate. Harrington notes that the Younger Onset Alzheimer's Act has been incorporated into this Act.

Idzikowski also points out an ongoing campaign by NCPSSM/ARP to spur Congress to act on legislation to lower prescription drug prices "Don't cut pills, cut profits". There are many such proposals, including H.R. # The Lower Drug Costs Now Act, the Speaker's proposal, only Gwen Moore from Wisconsin has cosponsored. Hope for some movement on this issue.

Harrington notes that House has passed unanimously the Act and is now in the Senate.

Casper states that unless we allow the federal government to negotiate drug prices with the pharmaceutical companies, the spiraling prices will continue, and seniors will continue to suffer and die early from lack of access to affordable medications.

Griffith notes that the extension of patent rights that prevent generic medications from coming to market is also a contributing factor.

MOTION: Send letter to United States Senators Johnson and Baldwin encouraging support for H.R.4334 - Dignity in Aging Act of 2019, which reauthorizes the Older Americans Act for five years and S. 62 - Empowering Medicare Seniors to Negotiate Drug Prices Act of 2019, or similar legislation, which provides CMS with the ability to negotiate for lower prescription medication in the Medicare program.

ACTION: Passes unanimously (Griffith, Hoffman seconds).

Idzikowski points out the handout on the increasing wealth gap for the elderly. Green comments on loss of pensions in the 1980s.

Mikolaczyk notes that new autoworkers retirees/workers do not have pensions and in the past active workers could choose to defer their COLA to retirees. That is how retiree pensions received an increase.

Most provisions on state Legislative Issues have not changed. Letter sent to Governor Evers urging a veto of SB103 regarding CNA Training.

Knutson and Stickler provides update on the Fair Deal initiative. Two bills introduced – one in senate and one in the assembly. Have been meeting with Milwaukee state legislative delegation as well as with the business community. Met with Rep. Skowronski. No current Republican cosponsor yet. Asks the Committee to support these bills and advocate with the entire Milwaukee state legislative delegation.

MOTION: That the Committee and Commission support Assembly Bill 521 and Senate Bill 471 and send a letter to all members of the Milwaukee delegation to the state legislature thanking those who have supported and reminding others that we expect their support.

ACTION: Passes unanimously (Griffith, Mikolajczyk seconds)

Idzikowski notes that the County is hosting a public session on the 2020 County Budget at the Marcus Center tonight at 6pm. Parking free.

Fred notes that Chris Abele is not running for reelection as County Executive. Discussion about the process for appointing a new Director of the Department on Aging in light of Holly Davis' resignation.

V. Mental Health for Older Adults (Information/Discussion)

Idzikowski notes that materials were included in the packet including a behavioral health profile of older adults in Wisconsin and Milwaukee County and dashboard on public mental health services in Milwaukee County as a whole and for older adults age 65+, as well as a flyer explaining mental health counseling provided by Jewish Family Services under contract with the Department on Aging.

Jennifer Bergeson, Milwaukee County DHHS Behavior Health Division deputy director, presents on BHD Initiatives engaging older adults in Mental Health services in Milwaukee County.

- BHD's Adult Mobile Crisis team (257-7722) can be deployed across the County. A geriatric specialty registered nurse is a part of that team, M-F, and available for 24/7 consultation.
- BHD part of Executive Steering Committee for Individuals suffering from abuse and neglect.
- Participating in a new grant initiative with MCDA elder abuse services for improving services
- CCCS – Comprehensive Community Service – a voluntary program that a person can be dually enrolled in Family Care and CCS benefit – health & wellness, and therapies.
- Working on a memorandum of understanding with local hospital to have a geriatric psychiatric unit at a local private hospital.
- Contract with Universal Health Services to provide acute inpatient acute behavioral care in a new facility with specialized services including geriatric care. Milwaukee County DHHS Mental Health Board will retain oversight.

County has closed the residential long-term support facilities and moved folks into the community. Parallel is the initiative to move out of hospital business. UHS hospital to be built in West Allis, County to contract with them. UHS is a national health care system that operates hundreds of behavioral health hospital and clinics.

Bergeson provides context for why UHS was selected as the acute care provider. A committee, including the Mental Health Board, BHD staff, clinical experts, and individuals with lived experience, came together to explore alternatives to maintaining BHD's existing mental health treatment center. After putting the matter out to bid, this group conducted due diligence, including performance measures, financial and legal risk, and a review of all clinical care and satisfaction and clinical care assessments. UHS is fully accredited by JCOH, well respected as a top performer, participate in the CMS oversight process for care and treatment. 571 distinct treatment programs for more than 131,000 patients.

Bergeson clarifies that BHD attorneys were aware that UHS was subject to a federal investigation at that time by the US Department of Justice. UHS settled a False Claims Act claim in 2019, regarding billing practices from 2014-2019. This was a civil matter and no criminal charges were filed.

Moeser notes that this claim involved \$127million in false claims in 30 of its psychiatric hospitals – the very type of hospital proposed in Milwaukee County. Moeser asks whether there were other proposals?

Bergeson answers that Correct Care also submitted a bid. A community consortium of local health systems was also initially interested, but they opted out. At that point, BHD put out the public RFP and received these 2 bids – UHS and Correct Care. Reviewed bid material and visited both facilities.

Moeser concerned that the initial response to his concerns by the BHD representative was dismissive. He also expresses concern that, given the huge amount of fraud involved, in movement to privatization, we not move forward without pausing to consider the serious nature of the fraud committed by UHS.

Knueppel asks whether a conversation with the attorneys who reviewed the contract might be appropriate to provide an answer. Bergeson states she will speak with Director Lappin and mention that this is a concern and find out the best way to provide this information. This is a very big decision. Milwaukee County has provided this care for a very long time. She would not be moving forward with UHS if she was not completely comfortable with the quality of the services they provide.

Griffith asks about cultural sensitivity to minority communities.

Bergeson notes that as BHD moves toward increasing reliance on community-based services, we need to rely more on our community partners to help us with these issues. Trying to build system that isn't reliant on a staff member but is responsive to the needs of clients and that involves diverse populations. Trying to increase awareness of access to system and make it easier to access. Cultural intelligence training, including racial equity initiative, Workforce development to try to add staff that look like the community. Realize that it is an element that needs more work.

Griffith notes that the LGBT community is subject to greater poverty, AODA, depression, suicide, and a victim of abuse or neglect. Many LGBT members come to Milwaukee from outside the county because they can get services and supports here. BHD needs to be aware of the specific needs of this population.

Bechtel – where do BHD's referrals come from?

Bergeson – from significant others, other hospitals and clinics, family members, self-referral, other health care providers, in short many different sources.

Idzikowski asks about the relationship between BHD and the Aging Resource Center.

Bergeson states that BHD interacts regularly with the Elder Abuse unit and Protection and Advocacy and will often initiate a connection for an older client to the appropriate resources through the ARC.

Moeser asks how police are involved in the community.

BHD has CART teams with police who go out with team to address behavior issues and not traumatize an individual and refer them to the correct services, not necessarily in the criminal justice system. Connected with 211. Acknowledges that the system can feel fragmented. Most of the time police will bring to PCS (Mental Health emergency room) for evaluation, treatment, and referral.

At this point, Knueppel recognizes a member of the public. She provides some context on a matter that personally affected her and states she does not know why she was denied services. Also relays some information regarding an altercation that occurred at the UCC. Bechtel offers her personal counseling.

Bergeson notes that another initiative is to expand BHD into community health services initiative to partner with 16th Street Community Health Clinic.

Abston Coleman asks about the age limit for the Adult Mobile Crisis team. Notes that a lot of folks don't even know about these services.

Griffith suggests doing presentations at Senior Centers.

Bergeson states that she can talk to the community outreach director about this. Any adult of any age can contact the Adult Mobile Crisis team.

Knueppel thanks Ms. Bergeson for her time.

BHD will add committee and Commission members to the BHD email listserv so the members can receive updated communications on mental health services. Idzikowski will provide lists to BHD.

- DOA Initiatives regarding mental health & wellness – Jewish Family Services

VI. Financial Exploitation of Older Adults (Info/Action)

Knueppel comments that most abuse occurs by family members or caregivers.

Idzikowski notes that there has been increased attention to financial exploitation of older adults. References legislation that is pending to increase penalties for elder financial abuse and to increase the ability to freeze accounts and transactions by financial services representatives on suspicion of abuse. There is a very low standard for this suspicion, without any liability for harm to the senior, as well as the ability to not recognize a legally executed Power of Attorney. Could cause unintended harm to seniors.

Idzikowski recognizes Matt Hayes from Legal Action of Wisconsin, and notes that LAW also has an Elder Justice unit that assists in referrals from the Elder Abuse unit when it involves a non-specific perpetrator, such as a phone or internet scams. Elder abuse cannot investigate such claims.

Griffith notes that there a lot of phone scams. Older adults are inundated and confused by these scams. It causes individuals a lot of stress.

Knueppel notes that the FTC does address this issue, but there are too many perpetrators.

Griffith doesn't think that policy members understand how this affects our senior's mental health.

VII. Announcements & Advocacy Opportunities (Inform.)

Next WAAN meeting will be held November 7th at the Dane County AAA.

State Senator Lena Taylor representative Elizabeth Coggs announced her presence.

Alzheimer's Association Advocacy Day will be held on Tuesday, February 11th at Park Hotel in Madison.

VIII. Future agenda items & meeting dates (Discussion)

IX. Honor Tom Frazier

MOTION: That the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging formally recognize Tom Frazier for his longstanding contributions to aging issues, the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging and for his help in supporting the Advocacy Committee.

ACTION: Passes unanimously (Green, Bechtel seconds).

X. Adjourn

MOTION: Adjourn this committee until January 6, 2020.

ACTION: Motion passes unanimously (Gary, Abston Coleman).

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Idzikowski
Program and Policy Coordinator